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Promotion and protection of the rights of children: promotion and protection of the rights of children

The Girl Child

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/138 of 17 December 2015, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of that resolution, including an analysis of improvements in social, economic and political investments made towards fulfilling the right to education for the girl child.

The report contains a brief overview of international obligations and global commitments with respect to the girl child. It addresses progress and challenges for the girl child in areas such as education, water, sanitation, hygiene, child labour, health, HIV/AIDS, poverty, nutrition and the addressing of violence, abuse and exploitation.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/138, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of that resolution, including an analysis of improvements in the social, economic and political investments made by Member States towards fulfilling the right to education for the girl child, to assess the impact of the resolution on the well-being of the girl child. The report also follows up on resolution 68/146 regarding the priority themes of water, sanitation and hygiene and child-headed households, as related to the girl child. For preparation purposes, notes verbales requesting information on the implementation of resolution 70/138 were sent to Member States and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes.

2. Section II outlines international frameworks with respect to the rights of the girl child and key obligations and commitments of States. Section III describes the situation of the girl child in key areas. Section IV provides a detailed analysis of progress and achievements towards realizing to the right of girls to education. Section V notes progress towards fulfilment of the other rights of the girl child. Section VI contains recommendations for action in education and the other key areas.

II. Legal and normative framework and global commitments

A. Human rights treaties and international conventions

3. Realization of the rights of girls is the obligation of every State, established by a comprehensive international legal framework. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols outline rights to be enjoyed without discrimination, including on the grounds of gender. The legal framework includes all fundamental human rights treaties with provisions confirming the principle of non-discrimination and equality between men and women, and boys and girls. Among those treaties, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women relates directly to the situation and well-being of the girl child.

4. Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child protects children's right to express their views and have them respected in accordance with their evolving capacities. In general comment No. 3 (2016) on women and girls with disabilities, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities notes multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination against women and girls with disabilities, and provides guidance on national obligations and implementation.

5. Binding labour law instruments include the International Labour Organization (ILO) Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) and Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), and the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930.

6. In its resolution 67/146, the General Assembly urged States to condemn all harmful practices affecting women and girls, especially female genital mutilation/cutting, and take all necessary measures, including enforcing legislation, raising awareness and allocating sufficient resources, to protect women and girls from that form of violence.

7. In 2016, the Committee on the Rights of the Child adopted general comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights and general comment No. 20 (2016) on the implementation of the rights of the child

during adolescence, which guides States on measures to ensure fulfilment of the rights of the child during adolescence.

8. The equal right to quality education for every girl is articulated and enshrined in numerous significant declarations, among them the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (art. 26), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

B. International conferences, intergovernmental bodies and related commitments

9. The extensive commitments of Member States in international forums to eliminate discrimination against girls include those made at the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994, and the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, as well as subsequent review conferences, in which Governments repeatedly recognized the fundamental rights of girls to sexual and reproductive health, education and participation in social, political and economic life without discrimination.

10. Spearheaded by the United Nations, the international community agreed in 2015 on 17 Sustainable Development Goals to pursue over the next 15 years. The needs and rights of girls are encapsulated in Goal 5 and cut across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Sustainable Development Goals related to the education of girls aim to universalize access to quality education, from pre-primary to tertiary levels, and express a specific mandate to redress social inequalities undermining access to educational opportunities. The empowerment of and investment in girls being central to sustainable development was noted by the General Assembly in its resolution 70/138.

11. In its resolution 68/146, the General Assembly reaffirmed the outcomes of United Nations summits and conferences relevant to the girl child. These included the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"; the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development; the declaration adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-ninth session; and the agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission at its fifty-first session, under the theme, "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child".

12. At its sixtieth session, in 2016, the Commission on the Status of Women passed resolution 60/2, on women, the girl child and HIV and AIDS. At its sixty-first session, in 2017, the Commission urged Governments to mainstream a gender perspective into education and training, including science, technology, engineering and math; develop gender-sensitive curricula; eliminate female illiteracy; and facilitate the effective transition of girls and women to work. Girls with disabilities and their right to education were highlighted in the conclusions adopted at both sessions.

13. The Incheon Declaration: Education 2030: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all, and the Education 2030 Framework for Action, reaffirmed education as the most powerful means of empowering girls socially, economically and politically. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) submitted a report to the Human Rights Council at its thirty-fifth session (A/HRC/35/11) in which the High Commissioner specifically called for the realization of every girl's right to equal enjoyment of education.

III. Situation of the girl child

14. Data show that the lives of girls today are better in many respects than those of preceding generations. Girls are more likely to survive childhood and attend school and complete their education, and less likely to be undernourished and to marry as children. Yet, girls everywhere still face significant deprivations and inequalities as a result of persistent gender discrimination. Further disadvantages based on age, poverty, disability, location, race, ethnicity and migration status compound the barriers girls face to building fulfilling futures for themselves and to making contributions to their communities and societies.

A. Education

15. The transformational impact of the education of girls on themselves, their families, community and society, including household incomes and the wider economy, is clear. Educated girls acquire more and better-paid work. An extra year of primary school increases girls' eventual wages by 10-20 per cent, and an extra year of secondary school increases wages by 15-25 per cent. Each additional year of schooling can add up to 18 per cent to a nation's gross domestic product per capita.[1]

16. Girls with higher levels of education are less likely to bear children at a young age and will have fewer and healthier children. Girls with secondary school education are one sixth as likely to marry as children, and girls with higher levels of education are less likely to become pregnant as adolescents. Children under 5 years of age whose mothers lack education are 2.8 times as likely to die as those whose mothers have secondary or higher education. Half of the reduction in under-five child mortality over the past 40 years is considered attributable to increased average years of schooling of women of reproductive age. A 2010 study suggests that, if all mothers had had at least primary education between 1970 and 2009, 1.7 million fewer children would have suffered from malnutrition.[2]

17. Globally, great progress has been made in getting more children, including girls, in school. In 2014, there were 31.7 million girls of primary-school age and 29.4 million of lower-secondary-school age out of school, compared with in 2000, when 57.8 million girls of primary-school age and 53.4 million of lower-secondary-school age were out of school.

18. Despite these gains, girls are still more likely than boys to remain excluded from education. There are currently 15 million girls of primary-school age who never attended school, compared with 10 million boys. Across sub-Saharan Africa, 9 million girls will never attend school, compared with 6 million boys; in South Asia, about 5 million girls, compared with 2 million boys, will never attend school.

19. While gender disparities in secondary education are closing, they remain extreme for girls and mask regional and country disparities. In 2014, 20 per cent of adolescent girls remained excluded from lower-secondary education in Western

[1] Jesús Crespo Cuaresma, Wolfgang Lutz and Warren Sanderson, "Age structure, education and economic growth", International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) interim report No. IR-12-011 (Laxenburg, Austria, IIASA, 2012).

[2] Emmanuela Gakidou and others, "Increased educational attainment and its effect on child mortality in 175 countries between 1970 and 2009: a systematic analysis", *The Lancet*, vol. 376, No. 9745 (18 September 2010), pp. 959-74.

Asia, compared with 13 per cent of boys; in sub-Saharan Africa, the figure was 36 per cent of adolescent girls, compared with 32 per cent of boys.[3]

20. Girls in humanitarian situations are less likely than others to get an education. For example, 36 per cent of refugee girls of primary-school age are enrolled in primary school, compared with 46 per cent of boys.

21. Among gendered barriers to girls' equal enjoyment of their right to quality education are child marriage, early pregnancy, gender-based violence, domestic labour and restrictive gender norms and opportunities that lead families and communities to place less value on girls' education when compared with that of boys. Girls' school attendance can also be negatively affected by distances to schools and lack of gender-responsive water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools, leaving girls without the means to maintain safe and private personal hygiene practices, including menstrual hygiene management. At the higher levels of education, the proportion of female teachers declines, which can negatively affect girls' participation.

22. Even when girls complete secondary education, they do not always acquire meaningful skills and learning outcomes that equip them for the future. For example, research shows girls are systematically tracked away from education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics throughout their school careers, despite the fact that girls who develop such skills enjoy more academic success, higher-paying jobs and higher self-esteem. Women make up just 28 per cent of scientific researchers worldwide.

B. Water, sanitation and hygiene

23. Girls and women are particularly affected by water scarcity, unsafe water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene practices. Girls are often excluded from full and continued participation in school because of their burden of water procurement at home and lack of water and sanitation facilities in schools.

24. Globally, women and children, especially girls, spend a cumulative 73 billion hours annually fetching water.[4] Water collection often results in injuries and exposes women and girls to the risk of sexual violence.

25. Girls and women also spend 97 billion hours annually securing a safe place to defecate. In many places, in both emergency and non-emergency contexts, girls and women with no latrine in the household wait until after dark to defecate, thereby increasing their risk of harassment and violence. Urinary tract infections and other illnesses arise from delayed urination and reduced water intake.

26. Inadequate attention to and investment in menstrual hygiene management continue to create challenges for girls. Millions of girls in low- and middle-income countries and humanitarian contexts lack access to supplies for the management of menstrual hygiene and adequate, private facilities to manage their monthly cycle with dignity and safety. Stigma and taboos leave girls subject to teasing, harassment and social exclusion during their menses.

[3] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics, "Closing the gender gap" (3 March 2017).

[4] Renuka Bery and Julia Rosenbaum, "Accelerate access to resources — land, clean energy, water, and sanitation", Deliver for Good campaign brief.

C. Child-headed households

27. The issue relating to child-headed households came to light because of the HIV epidemic and the large number of orphaned children. As of 2015, roughly 3.8 million children under age 18 had lost both parents to AIDS; 3.5 million of these children lived in sub-Saharan Africa.

28. Girls in child-only households commonly adopt adult responsibilities, including earning money and caring for and protecting younger siblings. This comes in addition to girls' already heavy burden of household chores (girls aged 5-14 in poorer countries spend at least 14 hours weekly on household chores). Girl household heads have less time to study, may temporarily or permanently abandon school and are at risk of violence, abuse and exploitation. Even though taking on adult burdens, child household heads may not have the same legal rights as adults nor have the same access to critical services as other poor children. While girls in these households comprise a small percentage of girls overall, their extreme situation remains of concern.

D. Poverty

29. Poverty reinforces gender inequality. In many parts of the world, when parents or guardians cannot afford to pay school-related expenses, girls are often the first ones removed from school. Girls living in poverty are more likely to be married as children or to have to work to ease family hardships — often ending their education and suffering other harmful consequences, further limiting their opportunities and often leaving them entrenched in poverty.

30. While extreme poverty is falling rapidly around the world, 1 person in 10 still lives on under $1.90 a day. Over half of the 767 million people living in extreme poverty are under the age of 18. It is difficult to assess the proportion that are girls because of a lack of sex-disaggregated poverty data.

E. Health

31. The number of countries with gender disparities in under-five mortality rates has fallen by more than half in recent decades, from 20 countries in 1990 to 9 in 2015. Compared with global patterns, girls' risk of dying before the age of 5 is significantly higher than expected in some countries, primarily in South Asia and the Middle East.[5]

32. Adolescent pregnancy is among the gravest health-related issues facing girls. Each year, about 16 million girls aged 15 to 19, and 1 million girls under age 15, give birth, most in low- and middle-income countries, with the highest rates in sub-Saharan Africa. Adolescent pregnancy takes an enormous toll on girls' health, education (which may be interrupted or ended) and their income-earning potential.

33. While maternal health problems affecting adolescents decreased significantly from 2000 to 2012,[6] complications during pregnancy and childbirth are still the leading cause of death for girls aged 15-19 globally.[7] Moreover, for every maternal

[5] United Nations Children's Fund, "Is every child counted? Status of data for children in the SDGs" (New York, March 2017).

[6] World Health Organization, "Adolescent pregnancy" fact sheet (September 2014). Available from www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs364/en.

[7] World Health Organization, "More than 1.2 million adolescents die every year, nearly all preventable", news release (16 May 2017).

death, more than 20 other women and girls suffer a maternal morbidity,[8] such as obstetric fistula, which leaves them in constant pain, vulnerable to infection, incontinent and often shunned by their husbands, families and communities.

34. Despite high rates of adolescent pregnancy, only about 15 per cent of adolescent girls aged 15-19 married or in a union are using modern contraceptive methods.[9] Many women and girls do not have the ability to make their own decisions regarding contraceptive use and sexual relations, and restrictive laws and norms prevent too many girls from accessing sexual and reproductive health information and services.

35. The leading cause of death for younger adolescent girls (aged 10-14 years) is lower-respiratory infections, such as pneumonia, which is often a result of indoor air pollution from cooking with dirty fuels.[10]

F. HIV and AIDS

36. Of the 36.7 million people living with HIV in 2015, about 18.6 million were women and girls. New HIV infections among children had declined 70 per cent since 2000 and 47 per cent since 2010, largely as a result of stepped-up efforts to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV.[11] Nevertheless, older adolescent girls and young women (aged 15-24) remained very high-risk groups, with the highest incidence of new HIV infections. Globally, adolescent girls (aged 15-19) made up nearly two thirds of new infections in their age group; in sub-Saharan Africa, that figure rose to three fourths.[12]

37. Knowledge of how to prevent HIV is very low in some areas, especially for girls; only 26 per cent of girls (15-19) in sub-Saharan Africa have comprehensive knowledge of HIV, compared with 33 per cent of boys.[13]

G. Food and nutrition

38. Adolescent girls and women of child-bearing age have increased requirements for key nutrients, such as iron, to support biological processes, including menstruation, pregnancy and lactation. Anaemia, which is caused mainly by iron deficiency, disproportionately affects adolescent girls in developing countries, although reliable estimates are not available. The nutritional impact of anaemia on maternal and infant health during pregnancy includes mortality and morbidity in the mother and baby, including a risk of miscarriage, stillbirth, prematurity and low birthweight. It also has a negative impact on girls' learning ability and work capacity.

[8] Tabassum Firoz and others, "Measuring maternal health: focus on maternal morbidity" in *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, vol. 91, No. 10 (October 2013), pp. 794-796.

[9] United Nations Population Fund, "Universal access to reproductive health: progress and challenges" (January 2016).

[10] "More than 1.2 million adolescents die every year, nearly all preventable" (see footnote 7).

[11] Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, "Latest global and regional statistics on the status of the AIDS epidemic", fact sheet (20 July 2017).

[12] Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, 2016 estimates.

[13] United Nations Children's Fund, *For Every Child, End AIDS: Seventh Stocktaking Report, 2016* (December 2016).

H. Violence, sexual abuse and exploitation

39. Millions of girls worldwide are subjected to various forms of gender-based violence, exploitation and harmful practices in their homes, schools, communities and workplaces, and in public spaces. These violations, including sexual, physical and emotional violence, child marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting, take a tremendous toll on girls' physical and mental health, with serious consequences for their social and economic lives.

40. Despite recent declines in the rate of child marriage globally, 15 million girls under 18 still marry every year. Child marriage and early unions exist in all regions, though are most prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Child marriages rob girls of their childhood, often meaning the end of their education, adolescent pregnancy and a lack of agency over their own futures. Girls who marry in childhood are at greater risk of intimate partner violence than same-age peers who marry later.

41. The prevalence of female genital mutilation/cutting is likewise in slow decline; however, even if progress is sustained, the number of girls affected is estimated to reach around 235 million by 2030. The practice is linked to serious mental and physical health risks, including complications during childbirth, maternal death, infertility, urinary incontinence, infection and tetanus.

42. One in 10 girls under the age of 20 has been subjected to forced sexual intercourse or other forced sexual acts at some point in her life. In three quarters of the countries with available data, more than one in five adolescent girls had experienced some form of violence at the hands of their partners in the past 12 months.

43. About 246 million children and adolescents experience violence and bullying in schools annually,[14] with detrimental effects on physical and emotional health and cognitive and emotional development. Much school violence and bullying, including cyberbullying, is based on gender stereotypes or targets students based on their sex, sexuality or gender identity. Gender-based violence in schools is associated with the loss of one primary grade of schooling, equal to $17 billion for low- and middle-income countries.[15]

44. School-related gender-based violence, such as sexual violence and harassment en route to and at school, including violence perpetrated by teachers, can deter girls' education and, in many cases, the transition to and completion of secondary school. These risks influence parents' decisions on allowing girls to attend school.

45. The persistence of child labour is a major barrier to girls' rights and education. Of the 168 million children aged 5-17 worldwide engaged in child labour, 68 million are girls. There are 17.2 million children aged 5-17 who are engaged in domestic work in a third-party household, of which 67 per cent are girls.[16]

46. In their own households, girls aged 5-14 spend 40 per cent more time, or 160 million more hours a day worldwide, on chores, such as collecting water and firewood, cooking, cleaning and caring for others, compared with boys their age.

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[14] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report* (Paris, 2017). The figure was calculated based on the percentage of children who had experienced verbal bullying, according to a 2006 study, and the number of schoolchildren globally.

[15] United States Agency for International Development, "What is the cost of school-related gender-based violence?", fact sheet (July 2015).

[16] International Labour Office, *Marking Progress against Child Labour: Global Estimates and Trends 2000-2012* (2013).

This overburden of unpaid household work leads girls to sacrifice important opportunities to learn, grow and enjoy childhood while perpetuating gender stereotypes and the double burden on women and girls across generations.

I. Humanitarian crisis and conflict

47. About 250 million children, almost half of them girls, are living in countries and areas affected by armed conflict. While humanitarian situations affect everyone, girls are especially vulnerable during conflict, disaster and displacement. Gender inequalities are often exacerbated during crises, and the usual protection mechanisms of family, schools, health systems and law enforcement commonly become weakened or destroyed.

48. In these situations, girls are at greater risk of gender-based violence and exploitation, including sexual violence, intimate-partner violence, sexual exploitation and child marriage, than during times of peace and stability.

49. Girls are 2.5 times more likely than boys to be out of school in conflict situations, and nearly 90 per cent more likely to be out of secondary school than their counterparts in non-conflict countries.

50. In emergencies and conflict, health services critical to girls' well-being, including reproductive health, maternal care and provision for menstrual hygiene management, are often scarce or insufficient. To cope with acute household deprivation or out of fear for their child's safety, parents may arrange early marriages. At times, girls may be forced to beg or engage in transactional sex.

51. In 2015-2016, 300,000 children were recorded travelling alone, up from 66,000 in 2010-2011; of these, 170,000 sought asylum in Europe and 100,000 were counted at the United States-Mexico border. Girls are particularly at risk, facing unsafe transportation modes, abuse at the hands of smugglers and traffickers, forced labour, rape and sexual exploitation. Girls made up 20 per cent of detected trafficking victims in 2014; boys made up 8 per cent. (Women and men made up 51 per cent and 21 per cent, respectively.)[17]

52. In the context of armed conflict, the widespread recruitment of girls for non-combatant purposes and abduction for use as sex slaves remains a grave concern.

IV. Education: progress and achievements for girls

53. The Sustainable Development Goals related to girls' education are substantially more ambitious than the Millennium Development Goals, aiming to universalize access to quality education from pre-primary to tertiary levels and underlining a specific mandate to redress a range of social inequalities, including gender inequality, that undermine access to educational opportunities. These commitments are supported by Sustainable Development Goal 5, on gender equality, which outlines a set of measures to create a broader enabling environment for gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment.

54. The United Nations is leading and coordinating implementation of Goal 4 by supporting national Governments in realizing girls' right to education. The Global Partnership for Education and the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative collaborated with partners and networks to maximize resources and results for girls'

[17] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* (2016).

education and gender equality. From 2014 to 2016, the Initiative's Fund for Documentation of Good Practice in Girls' Education and Gender Equality supported 17 organizations and local governments around the globe to highlight best practices and lessons learned in gender-focused education initiatives. To help education ministries identify gender disparities in education and address gender equality issues in education plans and policies, the Global Partnership, the Initiative and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) developed the 2016 Guidance for Developing Gender-Responsive Education Sector Plans.

55. At the July 2016 Girls' Education Forum in London, 21 government, United Nations and non-governmental organization partners reconfirmed their commitment to creating a world in which all girls complete free primary and secondary education equipped with the skills, knowledge and opportunities to lead productive and fulfilling lives.

56. *The Learning Generation*, the 2016 report launched by the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity, presented an evidence-based action agenda for implementing Goal 4, arguing that the education of girls is a catalyst for reducing child and maternal deaths and lifting people out of poverty, that specific efforts must include the most marginalized and vulnerable girls, and that learning for all can be achieved through transformations in educational systems in the following four areas: performance, inclusion, innovation and finance.

57. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team on Education and School Health and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) published guidance for education ministries and stakeholders on school-related gender-based violence to support the development and implementation of laws and policies, strengthen connections between education and child protection systems, and apply system-wide reforms. The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative and UNESCO co-hosted the Global Working Group to End School-related Gender-based Violence, gathering over 40 development actors to advance advocacy, research, evidence and tools for monitoring and effective responses. Strengthened programmatic approaches were complemented by guidance on monitoring the issue, such as the United States Agency for International Development *Conceptual Framework for Measuring School-Related Gender-Based Violence*.

58. In 2016, 60 country programmes assisted by UNICEF implemented strategies to accelerate the education of marginalized girls to the secondary level, including improving education quality, strengthening gender-responsive sector planning, engaging community support and making schools affordable, accessible and responsive to the specific needs of girls. This included addressing gender-based violence and providing water, sanitation and hygiene facilities and cash transfers. Since 2014, UNICEF has supported 43,000 schools with water, sanitation and hygiene services and programmes, including knowledge and products relating to menstrual hygiene, with an additional 1.3 million girls gaining access to such facilities in schools in 2016 alone.

59. Country-level efforts to foster safe school environments include the integration by Côte d'Ivoire, El Salvador and Mozambique of the prevention of school-related gender-based violence into national strategies to support girls' education. In Togo, UNICEF supported teacher capacity-building to address violence against children. In Mozambique, anonymous suggestion boxes introduced in selected primary schools helped children identify and report cases of violence.

60. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) worked in 13 countries to equip secondary-school girls and boys with skills and opportunities

to develop business ideas through the Entrepreneurship Curriculum Programme, helping girls generate their own income.

61. The Education Cannot Wait fund for education in emergencies was launched with the support of UNESCO, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and bilateral and civil society partners at the World Humanitarian Summit, held in Istanbul in May 2016, to mobilize financing for the estimated 75 million children and youth whose education is interrupted by conflict, disaster and emergencies. Initial investments in Chad, Ethiopia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen will reach 2 million children and youth, at least half of them girls.

62. United Nations agencies worked with partners to meet girls' urgent humanitarian needs, providing access to education services. UNHCR advocated with Governments and education ministries to improve the enrolment and retention of refugee children, especially girls, in schools or, when that was not realistic, to provide certification in parallel systems. In other examples, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) provided free basic education for half a million Palestinian refugee children (50 per cent of them girls) during 2015 and 2016. In Iraq, where girls' participation lags behind that of boys, UNICEF enabled over 330,000 girls in 2016 to access education.

63. Goal 4 calls for all boys and girls to develop the skills necessary for full participation in society, including skills for learning, personal empowerment, productive work and active citizenship. To strengthen girls' critical engagement with information, media and technology, UNESCO projects in Burkina Faso, India, Jordan, Kenya, Malawi, Qatar and South Africa trained girls on media and information literacy and the use of media to advocate for gender equality. A side event sponsored by UNESCO and the Government of Senegal at the sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women highlighted best practices from the UNESCO YouthMobile initiative in preparing young women in Africa for the changing world of work.

64. Young Syrian women who are sole breadwinners in refugee camps along the border between Turkey and the Syrian Arab Republic were supported by UNIDO with vocational skills training. In Angola, Cabo Verde and Mozambique, entrepreneurship training programmes led by UNIDO integrated gender principles into programme design and curricula. In Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Mali and Somalia, young women and girls received vocational training for reintegration into the labour market.

65. Myanmar embarked on a gender-sensitive curriculum reform aligned with labour-market needs, combined with a substrategy for girls in the national strategic plan for the advancement of women for the period 2013-2022, to improve girls' employability and future economic standing.

66. In Swaziland, women leaders dubbed the "Golden Girls" mentored adolescent girls on adulthood and professional development. In Zambia, UNICEF collaborated with the Ministry of General Education, a youth-led development agency and public and private partners to establish 200 girls' clubs in schools that provide information about professional career development and tertiary-level study.

V. Progress and achievements for girls

67. Progress has been made in numerous other areas, promoting the rights of girls and implementing General Assembly resolution 70/138. Key achievements are described below.

A. Access to water, sanitation and hygiene

68. Complying with General Assembly resolution 70/169, United Nations agencies helped bring water closer to homes and medical facilities and supported better sanitation options, especially for women and girls. In 123 countries (against the 2017 target of 125 countries), 75 per cent or more of households now have access to an improved source of drinking water. Similarly, the number of countries where one third or more of the population practices open defecation has been reduced from 23 in 2013 to 17 in 2015, only two countries short of the target of 15 for 2017.

69. OHCHR advocated for Member States to collect sex- and age-disaggregated data for monitoring progress in the elimination of inequalities in access to water and sanitation. The Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation advocated for gender equality in the realization of the human right to water and sanitation at the thirty-third session of the Human Rights Council.

70. Technical assistance by UN-Women and UN-Water helped better engage women and girls in the planning, provision and monitoring of gender-responsive water and sanitation services.

71. UNICEF developed a gender-responsive programming guide to address gender inequalities in the provision of water and sanitation services in homes, communities and institutions. In 2016, UNICEF supported improved water, sanitation and hygiene services and programmes in 7,100 schools, bringing the total number of schools supported since 2014 to 43,000. Technical and financial support was provided to equip 1,650 health-care facilities in 73 countries with water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, and 1.3 million additional girls had access to such facilities in schools. UNICEF supported menstrual hygiene management initiatives in dozens of countries to keep girls in school and improve adolescent health.

72. UNHCR prioritized the provision of sanitary materials for all refugee women and girls of reproductive age as standard practice in programmes. In 2016, UNICEF reached 1 million girls and women with menstrual hygiene management materials in 31 emergency contexts.

73. National articulation of the rights to water, sanitation and hygiene, especially with regard to the needs of girls, gained momentum in policies, appointments and institutions. Afghanistan, Cambodia, Jordan and Nigeria adopted development strategies, plans, guidance and/or standards addressing menstrual hygiene management in schools, informed by girls' experiences.

B. Girls' rights in health and HIV prevention

74. Included in Sustainable Development Goal 3 are calls for universal access to sexual and reproductive health care to reduce adolescent childbearing and maternal mortality and end the AIDS epidemic by 2030.

75. In 2016, the General Assembly adopted the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast-Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and to Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030, committing by 2020, among other goals, to reduce new

HIV infections among adolescent girls and young women to below 100,000 per year. Being at the epicentre of the HIV epidemic and recognizing the disproportionate burden on girls and young women, countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) sponsored Committee on the Status of Women resolution 60/2 on women, the girl child and HIV/AIDS.

76. An online global advocacy hub on comprehensive sexuality education, supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNESCO and the International Planned Parenthood Federation, was launched in 2016 as a virtual community of young activists and experts around the world to network, organize and share experiences and tools. The UNFPA Safeguard Young People programme benefited millions of adolescent girls and boys with interventions relating to policy, HIV and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services and sexuality education.

77. UNICEF supported countries in planning and budgeting for addressing adolescent pregnancies — with regard to both prevention and pregnancy care — as part of their national health plans. In 2016, 91 countries reported budgeted plans to reduce adolescent pregnancy, up from 83 countries in 2014.

78. Improvements have been made in antenatal care coverage for pregnant adolescent girls aged 15-19. In 2016, with UNICEF support, 32 countries provided antenatal care coverage for 80 per cent of adolescent girls who were pregnant, and 54 countries supported 80 per cent of adolescent mothers to deliver with a skilled birth attendant, up from 39 in 2013.

79. The UNFPA Maternal Health Thematic Fund and Action for Adolescent Girls initiative supported first-time young mothers who had experienced obstetric fistula, along with deprived and marginalized girls, during early pregnancy, childbirth and caring for their newborns.

C. Food and nutrition status of girls

80. School meals and take-home rations attract and retain children, especially girls, in schools. The World Food Programme (WFP) worked with government and civil society partners to provide school meals to 17.4 million children (half of them girls) in 62 countries in 2015; additionally, 1.3 million girls received take-home rations.

81. In 2015, WFP reached 1.3 million girls with programmes to prevent malnutrition and treated 2.3 million girls for moderate acute malnutrition. Through WFP programmes, 3.5 million pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers received nutritious food.

82. In 2016, 41 countries supported by UNICEF had anaemia reduction plans for girls, compared with 27 in 2013. In India in 2016, national and state governments provided iron and folic acid supplements to 85 million girls and boys and an additional 23 million out-of-school adolescent girls. UNICEF provided such supplements for over 600,000 adolescent girls in 10 provinces in Afghanistan.

D. Addressing violence against girls, sexual abuse and exploitation

83. The Secretary-General released a report in 2017 on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and established a high-level task force to develop a strategy for visible and measurable improvements in how the United Nations prevents and responds to sexual exploitation and abuse.

84. A real-time accountability partnership was established in 2016 between the International Rescue Committee, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNFPA, UNHCR and UNICEF to address prioritization and accountability in the prevention of and the response to gender-based violence in emergencies, focusing on strategic actions that fall within the responsibility and mandate of humanitarian actors during each phase of the humanitarian programme cycle.

85. Côte d'Ivoire, El Salvador, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Nicaragua and Thailand integrated communication for development work addressing sexual violence in schools into the education sector. In Uganda, child-friendly reporting, tracking, response and referral guidelines were rolled out, giving girls knowledge on protecting themselves from violence.

86. In 2016, 4.6 million girls, women and boys in humanitarian situations across 53 countries were supported by UNICEF with a risk-mitigation, prevention and response package to address gender-based violence. This was more than double the number of people reached in 2015, which itself was twice the number reached in 2014.

87. Palestine refugee survivors of gender-based violence, including boys and girls, gained access to counselling, psychosocial support, legal aid, shelter and medical services through UNRWA referral systems. UNRWA reported that 25 per cent of survivors of gender-based violence were children, 69 per cent of whom were girls.

88. Commitments to eliminating child labour include ratification of the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), including establishment of the need for children to attend compulsory education until they reach the minimum employment age (170 ratifications) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), taking into account the special situation of girls (181 ratifications). As of March 2017, the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) had 23 ratifications; domestic work is a sector with a very high level of feminization. In 2016, UNICEF, ILO and partners launched Alliance 8.7 (named after target 7 of Sustainable Development Goal 8) to end child labour, modern slavery and human trafficking, noting that more than half of those in forced labour are women and girls.

89. The Safe Cities Global Initiative of UN-Women supports local authorities and communities in improving safety for women and girls. In 2016, world leaders adopted the New Urban Agenda, setting global standards for urban development that demand full realization of the right to education, mobility, transportation and public services, leaving no one behind, and using age- and gender-responsive approaches.

E. Addressing harmful practices

90. The joint UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage is working with national Governments in 12 countries to support strategies in health and education, such as cash grants, awareness-raising and legal reform, to reduce child marriage. In its official launch year of 2016, the programme reached 1 million girls and almost 1.7 million community members with services and messaging related to ending child marriage. Twelve countries have budgeted for national action plans on child marriage, compared with only one country in 2013. The joint programme and UNICEF support 60 countries in preventing child marriage and assisting girls in unions, via legislative change, life skills and education.

91. A SADC model law on eradicating child marriage was approved in 2016; member States must harmonize national laws to prevent child marriage, in line with the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage.

92. In 2016, the General Assembly adopted resolution 71/175, a second resolution on child, early and forced marriage, expressing concern about the continued prevalence of the practice worldwide. OHCHR organized an expert workshop on the impact of existing strategies and initiatives to address child, early and forced marriage.

93. The UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting fostered public declarations of abandonment of the practice in 5,188 communities in 17 focus countries, reaching over 13.4 million people. Over 2 million girls and women received prevention, protection and care services. Two countries participating in the Joint Programme — Egypt and the Sudan — showed a decline of 10 per cent or more in girls 0-14 years of age undergoing the practice since 2008. Laws against female genital mutilation/cutting are in place in 26 countries in Africa and the Middle East and in 33 other countries with migrant populations from countries that practise it. In 2015, the Gambia and Nigeria passed such laws; Egypt amended its law prohibiting female genital mutilation/cutting to intensify penalties for practitioners.

94. UNFPA launched a global programme in 2017 to prevent son preference and the undervaluing of girls.

F. Commitments for girls with disabilities

95. In its resolution 71/165, the General Assembly urged the design of policies and programmes that fully address the rights of women and girls with disabilities. In the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, adopted at the World Humanitarian Summit, signatories recognized multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, calling for specific attention to the situation of women and girls with disabilities.

96. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean organized an expert group meeting in 2016 on advancing the rights and perspectives of women and girls with disabilities in development and society.

97. In 2016, UNFPA launched WE DECIDE, a global initiative bringing together key organizations of persons with disabilities to address sexual and reproductive health and the rights of persons with disabilities. With support from UN-Women, girls with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova participated in GirlsGoIT, a platform for empowering females in technology. In Guinea-Bissau, UNICEF initiated an HIV-prevention and peer counsellor training programme for girls with hearing impairments and their teachers.

G. Data collection, indicators and use of evidence

98. In its resolution 70/138, the General Assembly called upon States to collect and disaggregate data by sex and age as a fundamental prerequisite to addressing the full range of discrimination girls might face. In 2013, only 13 per cent of countries had dedicated a budget to statistics on gender.

99. UN-Women in 2016 launched "Making every woman and girl count", a flagship public-private initiative over five years supporting countries to improve the production, accessibility and use of gender statistics to inform policy and decision-making. The 2016 UNICEF report entitled "Harnessing the power of data for girls: taking stock and looking ahead to 2030" for the first time quantified the time spent on household work by girls and flagged that high-quality data was available for only one third of the 44 Sustainable Development Goal indicators most relevant to girls.

100. The WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation convened expert group meetings in 2016 to develop core and expanded questions and indicators for monitoring water and sanitation in schools and health-care facilities, including questions on the sanitation and hygiene needs of girls.

101. New data collection tools in the global multiple indicator cluster survey include questions on the frequency of water collection, the individuals responsible and the availability of sufficient water, allowing estimations of the time spent by girls on water-related domestic responsibilities. The women's questionnaire has new questions on unmet needs in menstrual hygiene management, and includes respondents' ages. A new education learning module captures basic literacy and numeracy skills of children (ages 7-14), which includes out-of-school children and produces data that can be disaggregated by household and individual characteristics. New questions also capture data on child functioning for children (ages 2-17) to enable disaggregation by disability.

102. The inter-agency Gender-based Violence Information Management System is operational in 14 countries, enabling humanitarian actors to effectively and safely collect, store, analyse and share data reported by survivors of gender-based violence.

103. Multiple countries are collecting data on violence in schools. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, in 2016, indicators on physical and sexual violence in schools were incorporated into the routine data collection system of the ministry of education. In Uganda, indicators on gender and violence against children in schools were incorporated into the education information management system and district-inspection tools.

104. Regional efforts to produce gender-disaggregated and girl-focused data include the assistance provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to assist member States in meeting the need for more comprehensive and gender-sensitive statistics, and the UN-Women 2017 assessment of gender statistics in Europe and Central Asia.

VI. Recommendations

105. While progress has been made in the condition of girls, significant challenges remain. In an unequal world, too many girls still lack adequate schooling, health, nutrition and freedom from violence. Efforts must be continuously enhanced and expanded to meet the needs of the world's girls. Decisive action from Governments and support from development agencies, non-governmental organizations and civil society are past due, and must actively engage everyone.

A. Educating girls

106. Achieving inclusive and equitable quality education requires major transformations in educational systems, applying a gender equality lens to curricula, pedagogy, administration, leadership, infrastructure development, teacher training, policy and data management.

107. Investments in education quality and curricula are needed, with financing and support that ensure that marginalized girls enjoy their right to quality education. Schools need to be made affordable by removing direct and indirect costs. There is strong demand from parents and girls for quality, affordable schooling; the supply and cost of education needs to address that demand.

108. Cross-sectoral initiatives are needed to address underlying factors that disadvantage girls' learning, for example, linking education with social policy investments in reducing household poverty and insecurity, or with the prevention of child marriage, child labour and the domestic burden of work for girls. Better nutrition, water and sanitation, and health also promote girls' school attendance and success.

109. Safe and enabling learning environments must be created, including safe travel to and from schools, adequate transportation and the bringing of schools closer to where girls live. Explicit laws and policies and enforcement mechanisms must address bullying, sexual violence and harassment of girls in schools. The importance of female teachers, both in protecting girls from sexual violence in school and in providing role models for successfully completing education, cannot be underestimated.

110. There need to be investments in building inclusive education systems that particularly target girls with multiple dimensions of marginalization, including refugees, migrants and girls with disabilities, through initiatives such as training teachers, subsidizing safe and accessible transport and infrastructure, raising awareness and removing administrative barriers to education. Access to national examinations and certifications and integration of refugee children into national education systems can improve outcomes for refugee girls.

111. Data and evidence relating to gender-equitable planning and programming in education should be strengthened. Things that work need to be investigated, at scale, to enable the most marginalized girls to enter and be retained in school and learn, including research pathways that support girls in putting knowledge acquired into practice.

112. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, the World Programme for Human Rights Education and target 7 of Sustainable Development Goal 4 highlight the importance of education that empowers children to know and exercise their human rights. Appropriate methodologies for human rights education to empower girls, especially girls from disadvantaged communities, need to be applied so that such girls can identify their rights and claim them effectively. The monitoring by national human rights institutions of girls' equal enjoyment of the right to education needs to be strengthened.

B. Improving access to water, sanitation and hygiene facilities and safe living environments

113. Financing for the provision and maintenance of gender-responsive water and sanitation initiatives needs to be increased and new and innovative partnerships that can reach girls need to be developed. Data and evidence on the realization of the human right to water and sanitation of women and girls should be shared. Access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene should be guaranteed and monitored, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls, especially those with disabilities and those in vulnerable situations.

114. Girls and women should be engaged in planning, designing, monitoring, implementing and evaluating water, sanitation and hygiene interventions, ensuring that girls' specific needs are incorporated, institutions become more gender responsive and duty-bearers are held accountable.

115. Contexts need to be created in which menstruation is viewed as healthy and normal, and not stigmatized. Girls should be informed about menstruation and

supported during their menstruation through providing access to sanitary products, water, soap, toilets (particularly in schools) and the ability to consult a competent health worker when experiencing menstrual health problems.

C. Addressing issues of girls in child-headed households

116. Girls' rights in child-headed households should be promoted and discrimination challenged through the monitoring of equality laws. Laws should ensure that family and social grants are obtainable by household heads under the age of 16.

117. Specific psychological and educational support interventions, at scale, are needed for girls in child-headed households. Ways in which schools, departments of education, Governments, civil society and religious organizations can be most supportive and provide role models for girls in child-only households should be investigated.

118. Interventions are needed to reduce household expenses, such as subsidies for food and access to free medicines. Economic strengthening, like cash transfers and enhanced business and training opportunities and scholarships, can allow girl household heads to continue with and return to school. Social protection measures should be established that strengthen community and peer support systems.

119. Governments must legally recognize girls who head households through birth registration, land and property ownership rights, and access to legal representation. Legislation must give them access to financial, social and health services. Measures should reduce the likelihood that girls heading households are forced to leave or miss school.

D. Prioritizing girls' health and nutrition

120. In the 2016 report of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (A/HRC/32/32), the Special Rapporteur noted that the lack of access to safe reproductive health services and information contributed to adolescent girls being among the most at risk of dying or suffering from serious or lifelong injuries associated with early pregnancies and childbirth. The Special Rapporteur called upon States to develop a core package of interventions for adolescents, including access to sexual and reproductive health services available free of charge, and to take legal, policy and other measures to address underlying and social determinants of adolescent health.

121. The most appropriate and cost-effective delivery platforms to reach girls in different contexts and age groups with health interventions should be identified.

122. School feeding is an incentive to enhance enrolment and reduce absenteeism, especially for girls.

123. Specific nutritional deficiencies of adolescent girls, such as anaemia and dietary intake, should be addressed through initiatives in nutrition education, behaviour change and micronutrient and macronutrient supplementation.

124. Youth, particularly young girls, should be given skills, knowledge and the capacity to protect themselves from ill health and HIV by removing legal barriers, like third-party authorization. Sizable gaps in access to sexual and reproductive health services, including those related to puberty, menstruation and the prevention, testing and affordable treatment of HIV, should be addressed for all adolescent girls,

including those with disabilities, in an environment respecting their right to confidentiality.

125. Comprehensive sexuality education that explicitly focuses on gender rights and gender power dynamics, which has been shown to be five times more effective in reducing unintended pregnancies and the incidence of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections,[18] should be promoted.

126. Girls, families and communities should be engaged in programme design and implementation. Access by young girls and boys to HIV testing and treatment should be scaled up to significantly contribute to their quality of life and reduce HIV-related mortality in this age group.

127. Indoor air pollution should be reduced through the promotion of cleaner cooking fuels.

E. Ending harmful traditional practices, violence and exploitation

128. Elimination of child marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting and other harmful practices requires intensified political interventions, additional resources and strengthened collaboration among Governments, partners and civil society.

129. Involving men, boys and entire communities through gender-sensitivity training and the raising of awareness in schools, communities and workplaces is an effective strategy to address traditional practices and violence rooted in harmful norms.

130. Accountable national governance and oversight committees must be established to prevent and respond to sexual abuse, exploitation, online abuse and other child protection issues, along the lines of the WePROTECT Global Alliance model.

F. Strengthening data related to girls

131. The visibility of girls should be increased and an understanding of gender norms and the intersectionality of disadvantage facilitated through the strengthening of data collection and disaggregation not only by sex, but in combination with information on age, poverty, disability, location and girls in child-headed households, among other things. Available and disaggregated data are a prerequisite to formulating appropriate programmes and policies that target girls' needs, and to monitoring their access to and satisfaction with services. Gendered data must be accompanied by analysis and research on effective interventions. Gender dimensions should be included in national demographic poverty profiles.

G. Supporting girls in emergencies

132. Gender-based violence and harmful practices in emergency settings must be addressed, prevented and responded to. Access to menstrual hygiene supplies and facilities, health information and services tailored to the specific needs of girls in emergencies must be ensured.

[18] Nicholas Haberland, "The case for addressing gender and power in sexuality and HIV education: a comprehensive review of evaluation studies", *International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, vol. 41, issue 1 (March 2015), pp. 311-351.

133. As the major relevant funding instrument and global platform for education in emergencies, the Education Cannot Wait fund provides an important opportunity for supporting programming that addresses the specific barriers to education faced by girls.

134. The participation of girls in peacebuilding and recovery efforts should be enhanced, allowing their perspectives and needs to be understood and incorporated. There should be investments in innovation and technology for creative, effective solutions and avenues to empower girls in emergencies, including violence prevention and skills-building.